



# CREDIT

*when it's due*

# Minnesota

## STATE PROFILE



State Funder: Lumina Foundation

### About Credit When It's Due

The Credit When It's Due (CWID) initiative is funded by six foundations and is supporting 15 states to develop reverse transfer programs and policies. Reverse transfer enables students to receive an associate's degree when students meet associate's degree requirements after transfer to a 4-year college or university.

### State Implementation Context

A total of seven universities and 24 community and technical colleges participate in CWID through the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system, and the University of Minnesota participates through a separate Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with community colleges throughout the state. Most MnSCU universities have the authority to confer the associate's degree, so community and technical colleges as well as universities may seek student consent and confer reverse transfer associate's degrees. Supporting MnSCU's reverse transfer efforts is the MnSCU Smart Transfer Plan that was endorsed in 2012 by MnSCU presidents to create a student-friendly transfer environment within the state.

### Key Implementation Strategies

**Statewide Coordinator and Steering Committee.** Reverse transfer implementation is supported by a designated, grant-funded Reverse Transfer Project Manager and Reverse Transfer Specialist at the MnSCU system. MnSCU also established a steering committee comprised of representatives from the community and technical colleges, the state universities, the University of Minnesota, and the system office to establish project parameters

and to guide implementation. The steering committee meets once every two months and serves as the policy advisory group on institutional policies and practices for degree audits; outreach and notification processes; and training for advisors, registrars, and staff. Campus transfer specialists provide input through their membership in a separate transfer advisory group, and campus experts who are working on IT/data systems for reverse transfer participate in a separate technology sub-committee to improve the Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) for the purpose of reverse transfer degrees. Early in the grant period, the committee determined the eligibility criteria for reverse transfer, including establishing a minimum residency requirement of 12 credits from a MnSCU college. The committee focused implementation efforts on students who transferred to a MnSCU university during the summer or fall terms of 2008 through 2012. The committee also recommended that any fees associated with processing of the reverse transfer degree would be waived.

**Staggered, Centralized Degree Audits.** Minnesota is using the DARS system that contains transcript-level information for all MnSCU students to conduct degree audits centrally on students who are potentially eligible for reverse transfer. The state staggered implementation of degree audits by identifying potentially eligible transfer students during Spring 2013, and the Reverse Transfer Coordinator and Reverse Transfer Specialist partitioned these students into seven groups for processing degree audits during the grant period. The seven groups were established based on the complexity of associate's degree requirements of the community and technical colleges from which the student transferred. Colleges with the fewest additional degree requirements were categorized into group one, and colleges with additional degree requirements were categorized into group two, three, etc.

**Clarification of Institutional Policies.** Two key institutional policies associated with reverse transfer are the residency requirement and graduation application fee. To address these policies, the Reverse Transfer Coordinator gathered data on residency and graduation requirements from all community and technical colleges to generate statewide discussion which resulted in some colleges deciding to waive graduation applications and/or fees for reverse transfer students who do not plan to participate in commencement.

**Coordination with the University of Minnesota (U of Minnesota).** MnSCU is coordinating with the U of Minnesota to develop a reverse transfer process for students who transfer from a MnSCU community or technical college having completed the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (i.e. the 40-credit general core). The U of Minnesota sends letters to identified students with instructions for contacting the MnSCU Reverse Transfer Coordinator, and students provide consent to have their records audited and may provide unofficial transcripts. If deemed degree eligible by the Coordinator, the student requests an official U of Minnesota transcript be sent to the community or technical college at his or her expense. Of the initial list of 452 potentially eligible U of Minnesota transfer students, 20 reverse transfer degrees have been conferred.

### Implementation Timeline

**December 2012:** Minnesota formed the reverse transfer steering committee to establish an implementation timeline and parameters, such as the eligibility criteria and graduation fee waivers.

**Spring 2013 – September 2014:** MnSCU used the state-level data system to identify potential eligible reverse transfer students and partitioned these students into seven groups based on the community or technical college from which they transferred. MnSCU conducted degree audits centrally for each of the seven groups of eligible students and MnSCU sent lists of students who meet degree requirements for Associate of Arts degrees to institutions, with communication samples and a timeline.

**December 2013:** The first reverse transfer associate's degrees were conferred.

**October 2014:** MnSCU launched the automated MnTC completion process which certifies completion of the 40 credit general education package that is the basis of all Associate of Arts degrees. Students identified by this process will be considered candidates for reverse transfer in future terms.

**April 2015:** MnSCU began developing an application to obtain electronic consent for release of student records. The application identifies students from the MnTC completion process who have met minimum credit and residency requirements and then generates a student portal alert requesting release of records consent for reverse transfer.



Credentials awarded as of May 2015: **1,362**

Credential Type: Associate of Arts



# Credit When It's Due: Minnesota Profile



## Reverse Transfer Process

Based on a review of implementation across CWID states, OCCRL developed a framework for the reverse transfer process that consists of five broad processes, and Minnesota's process is applied to this framework below.

1. **Student Identification:** MnSCU identified transfer students who were potentially eligible for reverse transfer based on state eligibility requirements.
2. **Consent:** At the advice of MnSCU General Counsel, there is no consent process needed for the centralized MnSCU system to identify potentially eligible students and audit their degrees. Once a system level audit has determined a student to be degree eligible, the student is contacted by the community college or university to provide consent through an opt-in process.
3. **Transcript Exchange:** MnSCU transcript-level data are centralized and institutions use u.achieve/DARS to electronically exchange transcripts. Except for the partnership with the UM, transcript exchanges are not necessary.
4. **Degree Audit:** MnSCU conducts degree audits at the system (central) level at the beginning of the process, and MnSCU institutions verify students meet degree requirement using u.achieve/DARS.
5. **Degree Conferral and Advising:** If students meet all degree requirements, MnSCU colleges and universities confer the Associate of Arts degree.

## Implementation Successes and Challenges

**Successes:** Minnesota benefits from having a shared transcript and degree auditing platform across the 37 institutions within the MnSCU system. Several technology enhancements have been developed as a result of the CWID reverse transfer project. MnSCU increased functionality of the website ([www.transferology.com](http://www.transferology.com)) utilized by students for determining how coursework transfers within the system. Grant funds were used to create a feature that automatically imports the courses students have taken within the MnSCU system, thus removing the need for students to manually enter course information and ideally increasing use of the website. MnSCU also developed a technology platform that allows institutions to automatically identify and record Minnesota

Transfer Curriculum completion on student transcripts, allowing administrators to query for the best pool of reverse transfer candidates. Another key success includes changes to institutional policies and practices that act as barriers to degree conferral via reverse transfer. As a result, FERPA practices were revisited by MnSCU General Counsel during Fall 2014, at which point it was determined that system office staff would obtain student consent for release of records prior to providing names of degree eligible students to campuses. Prior to Fall 2014, student consent was the responsibility of each individual institution.

**Challenges:** Course requirements for the Associate of Arts degree vary widely among institutions within the MnSCU system. Complex degree requirements at the college level often make it easier and more efficient for the degree to be conferred by the university rather than the college. Despite six out of seven MnSCU system universities having the authority to confer Associate of Arts degrees, however, the practice is uncommon. Many universities opted not to contact currently enrolled students for reverse transfer degree conferral. MnSCU is engaging university leadership in dialogue to investigate opportunities to change institutional practice and culture surrounding Associate of Arts degree conferral. Some MnSCU institutions used an opt-out consent method during the first implementation cycle, but MnSCU General Counsel advised all institutions to use opt-in for current and future implementation efforts. Because all institutions are now using an opt-in consent method, overall degree conferral rates have been low. Despite having current contact information, students are not responding and consenting at high rates even with numerous contacts and mediums of communication.

## Sustainability

A substantial portion of the workload completed by reverse transfer staff has been automated through the development of technological applications, and the MnSCU system intends to sustain reverse transfer beyond the grant period. Moving forward, the MnTC completion process will generate lists of reverse transfer candidates at the end of each semester. The consent request process will further refine this group of students to the best possible reverse transfer candidates and request consent for release of records. Consenting students will be audited by system office staff and forwarded to the appropriate institutions for degree conferral.

## Institutions Participating in Credit When It's Due

Alexandria Technical and Community College	Hibbing Community College	Minnesota State University-Moorhead	Ridgewater College
Anoka-Ramsey Community College	Inver Hills Community College	Minnesota West Community and Technical College	Riverland Community College
Anoka Technical College	Itasca Community College	Normandale Community College	Rochester Community and Technical College
Bemidji State University	Lake Superior College	North Hennepin Community College	St. Cloud State University
Central Lakes College	Mesabi Range College	Northland Community and Technical College	St. Cloud Technical and Community College
Century College	Metropolitan State University	Northwest Technical College	Saint Paul College
Dakota County Technical College	Minneapolis Community and Technical College	Pine Technical and Community College	South Central College
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	Minnesota State College – Southeast Technical	Rainy River Community College	Southwest Minnesota State University
Hennepin Technical College	Minnesota State Community and Technical College		Vermilion Community College
	Minnesota State University-Mankato		Winona State University
			University of Minnesota

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